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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#) [LG](#)  
SUBJECT: LATVIA NOT SURPRISED BY SPANISH POSITION ON CUBA

REF: SECSTATE 131637

Classified By: Counselor for Political and Economic Affairs, Brian Phipps, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Latvia is not surprised by Spain's attempts to scrap the EU Common Position on Cuba, but believes this is unlikely given opposition from the majority of EU member states. Latvia supports engagement with civil society groups and the promotion of human rights in Cuba, but has had no bilateral contact with Cuban civil society. Bilateral relations are limited to a single outstanding consular case, which was initiated following the Latvian Parliament's Cuba Friendship Group's only trip to Havana in 2007. (The delegation was comprised of four parliamentarians from the left-wing, ethnic-Russian Harmony Center Party.) Although Latvia established diplomatic relations with Cuba in the early 1990s, it does not have an Embassy in Havana. The non-resident Cuban Ambassador in Helsinki comes to Latvia about three times per year and meets with the Cuban community in Riga (approximately 26 people). Bilateral trade with Cuba is practically non-existent (2009 Imports: 8,000 euros; 2009 Exports: 320 euros).

12. (C) The Embassy delivered the aide memoire on U.S. policy towards Cuba to the Head of the MFA's Americas Division, Dace Rutka, on January 6. Rutka confirmed that Latvia has had no bilateral discussions with Spain about a change to the EU Common Position and doesn't expect there to be any serious discussion of the issue prior to late May 2010. Rutka said the MFA is not surprised by the Spanish position because it is not new, and has been laid out several times in the past. Rutka said that EU discussions on Cuba typically breakdown into three blocs of countries: 1) Spain/Italy/France typically push for a loosening of restrictions and improved relations; 2) Czech Republic/Slovakia/Poland/UK advocate for stricter or more aggressive efforts to bring about political change and respect for human rights; and 3) the Baltic countries and Sweden, which are in the middle. Rutka confirmed that Latvia remains committed to the EU Common Position that official visits to Cuba must involve meetings with opposition groups, and doesn't expect there to be any significant changes to this policy.  
ROGERS